Should blood donors be paid?

Some say it's OK to explore all options, while others feel it's crossing a line.

What you need to know

- **Blood donation is when blood is drawn from a healthy person so it can be used later in the medical treatment of others. A single blood donation can save up to three lives.**
- **In the US, standard blood donation is voluntary and donors are not paid.**
- **The minimum age to donate blood in the US is 16 or 17, depending on the laws of each state.**
- **Every two seconds, someone in the US needs donated blood for medical treatment.**



DONOR HISTORY
The first successful blood transfusion was in 1665, when blood was taken from one dog and given to another.

In the US, 4.5 million people receive blood donations annually. To meet that demand, the American Red Cross must collect about 12,500 blood donations each day. This summer, however, there was a major shortage in the blood supply, and the Red Cross declared a national emergency for the second time in its history. While many people responded by donating blood, the shortage continues. Some people believe paying donors would help. Others say that offering money in exchange for blood could lead donors to withhold information about health conditions that make blood donation risky. What do you think? Should blood donors be paid?

Yes—saving lives is most important

Even though there is a shortage of donated blood in the US, statistics show that only 3% of eligible Americans give blood each year. Supply is simply not meeting demand, and the urgency of saving lives outweighs every other consideration. The Red Cross and other organizations spend a lot of time and money on advertising and other appeals to donors, but it's clearly not working. Something else needs to be done, and paying donors has been proven to increase donations. Payment doesn't always have to be in the form of cash. It could be incentives like a day off work or a T-shirt.

No—that complicates things

Donors have to meet certain health requirements to ensure that giving blood is safe for them and the recipients. But experts say that paying people for blood makes it more likely that they will hide health information because they need or want the money. Besides, donating blood should come from generosity, not the expectation of a reward. When money or gifts are offered, it takes away from the spirit of the act. The existing system of unpaid donations could be improved by making it easier for people to donate. For example, rides for people who have trouble getting to donation centers could be arranged by volunteers or employers.

YES Three reasons blood donors should be paid

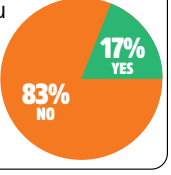
1. **Blood donations save lives, so we need to do whatever it takes to keep up the supply.**
2. **The current system isn't working, and paying people for giving blood has been proven to work.**
3. **Payment does not always have to be in the form of cash. It can be something as simple as a T-shirt or a day off work.**

NO Three reasons blood donors should not be paid

1. **If money is involved, people may not fully reveal their health conditions, making the donation unsafe.**
2. **Donating blood is an act of generosity and kindness. Paying people to do it takes away from that.**
3. **There are other ways to increase donations, like helping people get to blood centers.**

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked if school cafeterias should ban sweets. Your votes were clear: A large majority of you want treats to be available during the school day.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote YES if you think blood donors should be paid or NO if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.

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